

[Lee D. Leverett]

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Life [?]

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Rangelore

Tarrant Co., Dist. #7 Duplicate

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FEC [dup?]

Lee D, Leverett, 71. living at the Old Folks' Home, Tarrant co., Tex., was born Feb. 6, 1866, on a small ranch in Rusk co., Tex.

His father, Joseph D. Leverett, operated a combination stock ranch and farm. As a mere boy, Lee learned to ride a horse, and was a fair ride at age 10. He remained on his father's farm until he was 21 years old, then went to the Indian Territory (now Okla.) and worked for the Graham Ranch, located near the town of Duncan.

He remained with the Graham Ranch for several years before returning to Rusk co., where he engaged in business as a cattle dealer.

His story:

"I was born in Rusk co., Tex., Feb. 6, 1866. My father's name was Joseph D. Leverett. He ran a stock ranch and farm, running a few hosses and cows. There was not over 1,000

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head of stock at any one time and all the work was done by the family, except during a busy period, at which time an extra hand would be hired.

“Our sales was made to buyers that traveled through the country. The buyers would buy from different small ranchers until they had enough to make a herd, then drive the critters to a range. What we raised were the real Texas longhorns and the Texas cow pony.

“When I was a lad growing up, cows and horses were stomping around me all the time. I couldn't help but learn how to handle the critters.

“Well, when I was 10 years old, I could ride a hoss and smear a critter with the rope, and the other things that a cowhand was called upon to do. I took my turn at the work and stayed with it until I was around 30. C12 - 2/11/41 - Texas 2 “My father's outfit was the kind that cowhands referred to as a 'Grease-pot' outfit. Four regular hands could take care of the critters. My real ranch experience didn't start until I was 21 years old. At that time, I went to Okla., then called the 'Indian Territory'.

“I hit the drag for the Territory in 1887, and lit on the Graham Ranch, located in the section where the town of Duncan is situated. The outfit run about 5,000 head on an open range under the brand 'G'. All their sales were made in Kansas City, where we drove the critters.

“The Graham outfit worked about 10 hands. The only names I recall are Bill Haney and Bob Shank. The rest of the boys I can only recall their nicknames, such as 'Red', 'Blackey', 'Nosey', and the likes.

“One of the Graham boys did the chuck fixing and I can't recall his first name, because we always referred to him as the 'Cooky', 'Belly-cheater', or 'Whistle-berry'.

“With that crew we took care of 5,000 head, which would be out in numbers after each cut-out for the market. Then it would build back with the calf crop.

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"During all the five years on the Graham outfit there was no rustler trouble, or Indian trouble, to deal with. But, after I quit the outfit, the Indians gave a lot of trouble for a spell.

"There were plenty of Indians in that section and we saw lots of them, but they never put us to any trouble. The Graham boys would, now and then, give them a critter. There was always 3 some runty critters showing up that would not pull a price on sale and those would be given to the Indians, which they need for 'wohaw', the name they had for beef.

"Our trouble was the winter weather, and that took the silver lining out of our cloud. The Territory, during those days, and a tolerable lot of bad spells during the winter months, and real busters with sky-fire during the summer. During storms in when/ the critters need the most attention, because that is the time when they are most liable to go on the run.

"The cold spells in the winter gave us a heap of trouble. I have often had to cut holes in the ice of the water holes, so that the critters could get to the water. A number of the winters we had considerable numbers freeze to death. It was the weaker ones, of course, that would be unable to stand the cold.

"When a real winter buster headed in on us, extra hands were put to riding the line; and that was a he-man's job. The outfit was so located that we had several good size timber spots on the range, and we used the timber to stop the stampedes.

"When a stampede started we would herd the critters into the timber and the woods would soon slow the critters down, also bust up the run so we could hold the animals. After the herd hit the timber we would circle the woods and hold the animals in the woods. Because of the situation we never had a hard job trying to stop a run.

"There was only one stampede which resulted in a loss of critters and that happened in the summer time. The run took place at the start of a cyclone. The weather just before one of 4 those busters hit is mucky. A person gets to feeling that he should be at some other spot. The critters would get the same feeling and start to milling. If a clash of thunder

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hits, a run can be looked for. That was what happened the time I was talking about, and the clash sounded as though the earth had bursted. One clash followed another and, with each roar, the critters seemed to pick up speed.

“We had the herd headed for the timber and when they hit it they did it so hard that a number run plumb into trees and went down. About 25 were stomped to death. After a stomp, it would take a day to get the herd back on the grazing grounds.

“Our worst job was line riding and the night job was the one that raised the bristles on the waddies' necks. I have done night riding when it was sleeting, with a norther blowing so cold that it would put the teeth of an iron hoss to shattering. We waddies used to say that the only reason a man would stay with that kind of work was because his brain was located next to the saddle.

“On top of the tough night riding, we lived in dugouts. That is, we did in the winter months. During the summer, we lived in the open, except during spells of rain that would drive us into the dugouts.

“The dugouts were just holes slanted into the ground, deep enough for a person to stand up in, and a roof made of poles, covered with sod. When a damp spell of weather was on, the duggouts became tolerable mucky. 5 “After a long wet spell, one time, when a bunch of us were standing around a hand-made stove trying to dry out, a waddy pulled a 'Home sweet home' sign out of his band and stuck it on the wall. We drove him out in the rain as punishment for insulting home.

“When the weather was fair, the work was fitting for a man, and living out in the open always kept me fit as a fiddle. I could always lie down at night and sleep like a drunken sailor, and get up in the morning rearing to go. I never seen a waddy that was not ready to take on a load of beans and beef, morning, noon and night.

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"The Graham lad that did the cooking was just a fair-to-middling cocky. He could boil, bake and burn beans, but no matter how he dished out the stuff we lined our flue with the whistle-berries. Beef and beans were the main flue liners. We would have beans and beef for breakfast, then beef and beans for dinner, and at supper time we would get some more beef and beans.

"The beef and bean fare would be backed up with sour-dough bread. I want to say right here that the belly-cheater didn't learn to bake bread from the teaching of Mr. John Bun, the inventor of the bun. Sometimes the bread would come up in fair shape, and then not so anyone would hanker or it. The bread was a hit and miss proposition, with more misses than hits.

"One time, Red rolled a chunk of the bread into a ball and, sort of playful like, threw it at a steer. It hit the critter in the eye, and I'll be damned if it didn't knock the critter's eye out. 6
"But, kick as we may about the chuck, there was always all that we wanted, and none of us lost any leaf lard from eating it. Facts is, we were all as strong as a hoss in power, and smell as well.

"We had the beef-bean order broken a little with canned vegetables, and there was always plenty of black coffee. Then at times some of us would shoot wild game. "I went on several of the drives to Kansas City, and for some reason we always played in luck. Our herd never run over 1,000 and that size herd can be easily handled. A good many of the drivers lost considerable critters, but the Graham boys seemed to pick the proper time. During all my trips, we had good weather, and that is the one thing needed with the cattle on the drift..

"What I have told you just about covers our work. How we waddies on the Graham outfit spent our off time does not take long to tell. There was no place to go for amusement, so we had to amuse ourselves. That we did by putting up targets and shooting against each

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other. We also threw the loop, did bull-dogging, and anything else that struck our fancy. We always tried to see who could tell the biggest lies.

“The cleanest lie I ever heard was told by Bob Shank. He was an oldtimer and had nested on many outfits all over the Southwest. Let me give you that tale, the best I can, as he told it:

“I was nesting with an outfit down on the border, before 7 the Civil war. The ramrod got an idea in his conk to move his outfit into a valley country across the Rio Grande. So we drifted the critters into the country and got nicely settled.

“There were several varqueros in the outfit and them fellows are set on having their cock-fights. They had several cocks that they took along, and fixed a run for the birds next to a spring where the birds had plenty of fresh water.

“After the runs were fixed the birds were placed in the pens, and at once started to scratch for worms and other food. It wasn't long until those birds were trying to break out of the runs. The Mexican varqueros pronto got busy to see what all the fuss was about. You may not believe it, but the facts are that a large number of worms were chasing hell out of those fighting birds.

“Fellows, it was a sight to see those worms leaping up at the ears of those vicious birds. The worms had the cocks plumb loco and the birds had to be taken out of the runs.

“About the second day, several of the old mosey horned cows got stubborn. By God, they refused to be herded, and would paw the ground like an old fighting bull, and make for the hoss.. The next day, a few more of the old critters took courage and put their bristles up when we wanted to herd the animals around.

“The matter was getting serious. If any more of the critters took on such courage the herd would be out of control.

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“There was a little fellow in the brunch whom all the rawhides picked on. He was the 'goat' of the outfit. Waddy 8 Jones started to have some fun with the 'goat', and he surprised everyone by beating hell out of Jones. There was something funny about the whole thing.

“After the fight between the two men, I called the 'goat' to one side and asked how come that he tied into Jones and beat up on him so easily. He told me to take a drink of the water out of the spring where the chickens runs were. I did, and I felt so strong that I was afraid of myself. That was the answer to the mystery. We named the spring the 'Courageous Spring'.

“What we had to do was see that every man, beast and fowl, drank out of the spring, and that put everything where things stood before drinking any of the water.

“When I quit the Graham outfit, I returned to Rusk county and went in business with my father, buying and selling cattle, which I did for several years.